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## Kids could fill labor shortages, even in bars, if these lawmakers succeed

By HARM VENHUIZEN

Associated Press/Report for America

**MADISON, Wis. (AP)** — Lawmakers in several states are embracing legislation to let children work in more hazardous occupations, for more hours on school nights and in expanded roles, including serving alcohol in bars and restaurants as young as 14. The efforts to significantly roll back labor rules are largely led by Republican lawmakers to address worker shortages and, in some cases, run afoul of federal regulations. Child welfare advocates worry the measures represent a coordinated push to scale back hard-won protections for minors. "The consequences are potentially disastrous," said Reid Maki, director of the Child Labor Coalition, which advocates against exploitative labor policies.

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Arkansas Gov. Sarah Huckabee Sanders speaks, Feb. 7, 2023, in Little Rock, Ark.

Associated Press

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# Kids could fill labor shortages, even in bars, if these lawmakers succeed

Continued from Front

"You can't balance a perceived labor shortage on the backs of teen workers." Lawmakers proposed loosening child labor laws in at least 10 states over the past two years, according to a report published last month by the left-leaning Economic Policy Institute. Some bills became law, while others were withdrawn or vetoed. Legislators in Wisconsin, Ohio and Iowa are actively considering relaxing child labor laws to address worker shortages, which are driving up wages and contributing to inflation. Employers have struggled to fill open positions after a spike in retirements, deaths and illnesses from COVID-19, decreases in legal immigration and other factors.

The job market is one of the tightest since World War II, with the unemployment rate at 3.4% — the lowest in 54 years.

Bringing more children into the labor market is, of course, not the only way to solve the problem. Economists point to several other strategies the country can employ to alleviate the labor crunch without asking kids to work more hours or in dangerous settings.

The most obvious is allowing more legal immigration, which is politically divisive but has been a cornerstone of the country's ability to grow for years in the face of an aging population. Other strategies could include incentivizing older workers to delay retirement, expanding opportunities for formerly incarcerated people and making child-care more affordable, so that parents have greater flexibility to work.

In Wisconsin, lawmakers are backing a proposal to allow 14-year-olds to serve alcohol in bars and restaurants. If it passed, Wisconsin would have the lowest such limit nationwide, according to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism.

The Ohio Legislature is on track to pass a bill allowing students ages 14 and 15 to



**Iowa Governor Kim Reynolds holds a news conference on COVID-19 in Johnston, Iowa, Tuesday, May 19, 2020.**

work until 9 p.m. during the school year with their parents' permission. That's later than federal law allows, so a companion measure asks the U.S. Congress to amend its own laws.

Under the federal Fair Labor Standards Act, students that age can only work until 7 p.m. during the school year. Congress passed the law in 1938 to stop children from being exposed to dangerous conditions and abusive practices in mines, factories, farms and street trades.

Republican Arkansas Gov. Sarah Huckabee Sanders signed a law in March eliminating permits that required employers to verify a child's age and a parent's consent. Without work permit requirements, companies caught violating child labor laws can more easily claim ignorance.

Sanders later signed separate legislation raising civil penalties and creating criminal penalties for violating child labor laws, but advocates worry that eliminating the permit requirement makes it significantly more difficult to investigate violations.

Other measures to loosen child labor laws have been passed into law in New Jersey, New Hampshire and Iowa.

Iowa Republican Gov. Kim Reynolds signed a law last year allowing teens aged 16 and 17 to work unsupervised in child care centers. The state Legislature approved a bill this month to allow teens of that age to serve alcohol in restaurants. It would also expand the hours minors can work. Reynolds, who said in April she supports more youth employment, has until June 3 to sign or veto the measure.

Republicans dropped provisions from a version of the bill allowing children aged 14 and 15 to work in dangerous fields including mining, logging and meatpacking. But it kept some provisions that the Labor Department says violate federal law, including allowing children as young as 14 to briefly work in freezers and meat coolers, and extending work hours in industrial laundries and assembly lines.

Teen workers are more likely to accept low pay and less likely to unionize or push for better working conditions, said Maki, of the Child Labor Coalition, a Washington-based advocacy network.

"There are employers that benefit from having kind of docile teen workers," Maki said, adding that teens

are easy targets for industries that rely on vulnerable populations such as immigrants and the formerly incarcerated to fill dangerous jobs.

The Department of Labor reported in February that child labor violations had increased by nearly 70% since 2018. The agency is increasing enforcement and asking Congress to allow larger fines against violators.

It fined one of the nation's largest meatpacking sanitation contractors \$1.5 million in February after investigators found the company illegally employed more than 100 children at locations in eight states. The child workers cleaned bone saws and other dangerous equipment in meatpacking plants, often using hazardous chemicals.

National business lobbyists, chambers of commerce and well-funded conservative groups are backing the state bills to increase teen participation in the workforce, including Americans for Prosperity, a conservative political network and the National Federation of Independent Business, which typically aligns with Republicans.

The conservative Opportunity Solutions Project and its parent organization, Flori-

da-based think tank Foundation for Government Accountability, helped lawmakers in Arkansas and Missouri draft bills to roll back child labor protections, The Washington Post reported. The groups, and allied lawmakers, often say their efforts are about expanding parental rights and giving teenagers more work experience.

"There's no reason why anyone should have to get the government's permission to get a job," Republican Arkansas Rep. Rebecca Burkes, who sponsored the bill to eliminate child work permits, said on the House floor. "This is simply about eliminating the bureaucracy that is required and taking away the parent's decision about whether their child can work."

Margaret Wurth, a children's rights researcher with Human Rights Watch, a member of the Child Labor Coalition, described bills like the one passed in Arkansas as "attempts to undermine safe and important workplace protections and to reduce workers' power."

Current laws fail to protect many child workers, Wurth said.

She wants lawmakers to end exceptions for child labor in agriculture. Federal law allows children 12 and older to work on farms for any amount of time outside of school hours, with parental permission. Farm workers over 16 can work at dangerous heights or operate heavy machinery, hazardous tasks reserved for adult workers in other industries.

Twenty-four children died from work injuries in 2021, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Around half of deadly work incidents happened on farms, according to a report from the Government Accountability Office covering child deaths between 2003 and 2016.

"More children die working in agriculture than in any other sector," Wurth said. "Enforcement isn't going to help much for child farm workers unless the standards improve." □



# Biden stops GOP-led effort to block DC police reform law

By COLLEEN LONG

Associated Press

**WASHINGTON (AP)** — President Joe Biden on Thursday — the third anniversary of George Floyd's murder — vetoed an effort led by congressional Republicans to overturn a new District of Columbia law on improving police accountability. The law was part of a push to reform policing nationwide and passed in the wake of the police killing of Floyd in 2020 in Minneapolis. Biden has said he supported many parts of the law, including the banning of chokeholds, limiting use of deadly force, improving access to body cameras and requiring training for officers to de-escalate tense situations.

"I believe we have an obligation to make sure that all our people are safe and that public safety depends on public trust," Biden said in a statement to Congress vetoing the effort. "It is a core policy of my administration to provide law enforcement with the resources they need for effective, accountable community policing."

The veto comes as Democrats in Congress have twice this year joined with Republicans to try to block a crime and policing law in the district. The first effort Biden supported — overturning changes to the dis-



Washington Metropolitan Police investigate near the Supreme Court and U.S. Capitol in Washington, Oct. 19, 2022.

Associated Press

trict's criminal code.

Washington is not a state; and it lacks the same rights that states have to make and amend laws. While Congress has allowed the city's residents some powers of "home rule," it has retained the power to overturn district government actions. District residents also do not have voting members of Congress.

Still, Congress has not regularly used its power to repeal — until this year. Biden's signature two months ago marked the first time in more than three decades that Congress nul-

lified the capital city's laws through the disapproval process — and reflected a shift in the long-held Democratic position that the federal government should let D.C. govern itself.

The earlier bill was an overhaul to the District of Columbia's criminal code. It hasn't been updated substantially since it was first drafted in 1901 — though Black people have been disproportionately affected by the criminal laws, similar to many other cities. The revisions would have redefined some crimes, changed criminal justice

policies and reworked how sentences should be handed down after convictions. It also would have done away with mandatory minimum sentences for many crimes and would have reduced the maximum penalties for burglary, carjacking and robbery.

The Senate approved the House bill that sought to overturn the criminal code changes. Biden signed that resolution, ultimately blocking the D.C. law. The president and members of both parties expressed concern about rising violent crime rates in cities nationwide

and said the revisions could lead to rising crime.

In D.C., homicides in the city had risen for four years straight before they dropped around 10% in 2022. The 2021 murder count of 227 was the highest since 2003.

The Senate also voted to overturn the District of Columbia law enacted last year to improve police accountability, after six Democrats voted for the GOP-led resolution. But this time, Biden wasn't on board.

"The Congress should respect the District of Columbia's right to pass measures that improve public safety and public trust. I continue to call on the Congress to pass commonsense police reform legislation," Biden said.

And the president, in a separate missive, also offered condolences to the family of George Floyd, whose death sparked anew protests over police killings of Black people, and calls to reform law enforcement nationwide.

"George Floyd's murder exposed for many what Black and brown communities have long known and experienced — that we must make a whole of society commitment to ensure that our nation lives up to its founding promise of fair and impartial justice for all under the law," he said. □

## DOJ expands anti-profiling rules to cover thousands more who work in justice system

By LINDSAY WHITEHURST

Associated Press

**WASHINGTON (AP)** — The Justice Department issued new guidance Thursday emphasizing that investigations must be free from bias involving race and gender or against people with disabilities. Anti-profiling rules were also expanded to include thousands more people who work in the justice system.

The guidelines obtained by The Associated Press are the first updates in nearly a decade and now cover thousands more people than before, including pros-

ecutors, lawyers, analysts and contractors. They already applied to agents for Justice Department agencies such as the FBI and the Drug Enforcement Administration and local officers who work with them on task forces.

Released on the third anniversary of the death of George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis police, the update also requires, for the first time, more extensive data collection measures that are intended to ensure the guidance is being followed.

"We recognize that we

have a responsibility to lead by example," Attorney General Merrick Garland said.

The American Civil Liberties Union said the changes are a step forward, but that the guidelines don't fully ban bias across national security activities, including areas where the most harm have occurred like watch lists and pressuring to become informants.

"We welcome the improvements the Justice Department has made, but are disappointed that after so much work and communities' calls for change,



Attorney General Merrick Garland speaks during a news conference at the Justice Department in Washington, Friday, April 14, 2023.

Associated Press

this policy falls short of a full and effective ban on discrimination by federal agencies," said Hina Shamsi, director of the ACLU's National Security Project, in

a statement.

"Fair and unbiased law enforcement practices are smart and effective law enforcement practices," according to the guidance. □



# Indiana doctor's discipline hearing centers on privacy

By **TOM DAVIES**  
Associated Press

**INDIANAPOLIS (AP)** — A hearing on possible disciplinary action opened Thursday for an Indianapolis doctor who spoke publicly about providing an abortion to a 10-year-old rape victim from Ohio, with finger pointing over how the case became a political flashpoint in the national abortion debate. Indiana's Republican attorney general has accused Dr. Caitlin Bernard of violating state law by not reporting the girl's child abuse to Indiana authorities. She's also accused of breaking federal patient privacy laws by telling a newspaper reporter about the girl's treatment. Bernard has consistently defended her actions and told the state Medical Licensing Board Thursday that she followed Indiana's reporting requirements and hospital policy by notifying hospital social workers of the child abuse and that the girl's rape was already being investigated by Ohio authorities. Bernard's lawyers also said that she didn't release any identifying information about the girl that would break privacy laws. The Indianapolis Star cited the girl's case in a July 1 article that sparked a national political uproar



Dr. Caitlin Bernard, left, sits between attorneys John Hoover and Alice Morical on Thursday, May 25, 2023, before a hearing in front of the state medical board at the Indiana Government South building in downtown Indianapolis.

in the weeks after the U.S. Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade* last June, putting into effect an Ohio law that prohibited abortions after six weeks of pregnancy. Some news outlets and Republican politicians falsely suggested Bernard fabricated the story, until a 27-year-old man was charged with the rape in Columbus, Ohio. During an event at the White House, President Joe Biden nearly shouted his outrage over the case. Bernard's lawyer Alice Morical told the board Thursday that the doctor reported child

abuse of patients many times a year and that a hospital social worker had confirmed with Ohio child protection staffers that it was safe for the girl to leave with her mother. "Dr. Bernard could not have anticipated the atypical and intense scrutiny that this story received," Morical said. "She did not expect that politicians would say that she made the story up." Indiana Attorney General Todd Rokita's complaint asked the licensing board to impose "appropriate disciplinary action" but doesn't specify a requested

penalty. Amid the wave of attention to the girl's case last summer, Rokita, who is stridently anti-abortion, told Fox News he would investigate Bernard's actions, calling her an "abortion activist acting as a doctor." Deputy Attorney General Cory Voight argued Thursday that the board must address what he called an "egregious violation" of patient privacy and Bernard's failure to notify Indiana's Department of Child Services and police about the rape. "There's been no case like this before the board," Voight said. "No

physician has been as brazen in pursuit of their own agenda." Voight asked Bernard why she discussed the Ohio girl's case with the newspaper reporter and later in other news media interviews rather than using a hypothetical situation. "I think that it's incredibly important for people to understand the real-world impacts of the laws of this country about abortion," Bernard said. "I think it's important for people to know what patients will have to go through because of legislation that is being passed and a hypothetical does not make that impact." During Thursday's hearing, Rokita's office kept up a running commentary on its official Twitter account, with one post saying "When Bernard talked about the high priority she puts on legislation and speaking to the public, she did so at the expense of her own patient. This shows where her priorities are as an activist rather than a doctor." Bernard objected to questioning from Voight that she wouldn't be facing misconduct allegations if she hadn't discussed the girl's case publicly. "I think if the attorney general, Todd Rokita, had not chosen to make this his political stunt we wouldn't be here today," Bernard said. □

# Bannon's trial in 'We Build the Wall' scheme set for May 2024

By **MICHAEL R. SISAK**  
Associated Press  
**NEW YORK (AP)** — Steve

Bannon, the conservative strategist and longtime ally of former President Donald



Steve Bannon, center, appears in Manhattan Supreme Court, Thursday, May 25, 2023 in New York.

Associated Press

Trump, will stand trial next May on charges that he duped donors who gave money to build a wall along the U.S. southern border, a judge said Thursday. Judge Juan Manuel Merchan set Bannon's trial in the "We Build the Wall" case for May 28, 2024, amending his calendar after realizing that the date he announced in court May 27 is next year's Memorial Day holiday, when courts will be closed. If the schedule holds, Bannon will stand trial soon after Trump is slated to do so in the same Manhattan courtroom in an unrelated criminal case.

Bannon, 69, pleaded not guilty last September following his indictment on state money laundering, conspiracy, fraud and other charges. Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg took up the case after Bannon's federal prosecution was cut short by a Trump pardon. Presidential pardons apply only to federal crimes, not state offenses. Bannon is accused of falsely promising donors that all money given to the We Build the Wall campaign would go toward building a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border. Instead, prosecutors allege

that the money was used to enrich Bannon and others involved in the project. Brian Kolfage and Andrew Badolato pleaded guilty to federal charges and were sentenced to prison. A third defendant, Timothy Shea, was convicted in October and is scheduled to be sentenced next month. Merchan is presiding over both the Bannon and Trump cases. Bannon is free pending trial. Thursday's hearing lasted all of four minutes. "We'll see you back in here in May," Bannon said as he left the courthouse in a black SUV. □



# U.N. peacekeeping on 75th anniversary: Successes, failures and many challenges

By **EDITH M. LEDERER**

**Associated Press**

**UNITED NATIONS (AP)** —

Over the past 75 years, the United Nations has sent more than 2 million peacekeepers to help countries move away from conflict, with successes from Liberia to Cambodia and major failures in former Yugoslavia and Rwanda. Today, it faces new challenges in the dozen hotspots where U.N. peacekeeping has operations, including more violent environments, fake news campaigns and a divided world that is preventing its ultimate goal: successfully restoring stable governments.

The organization marked the 75th anniversary of U.N. peacekeeping and observed the International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers on Thursday with a solemn ceremony honoring the more than 4,200 peacekeepers who have died since 1948, when a historic decision was made by the U.N. Security Council to send military observers to the Middle East to supervise implementation of Israeli-Arab armistice agreements. For the 103 peacekeepers added to the list in 2022, medals were accepted by ambassadors from their 39 home countries.

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres asked the hundreds of uniformed military officers and diplomats at the ceremony to stand



**Soldiers line up at the United Nations Peace Operations Training Center (CECOPAZ) before the arrival of United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon in Asuncion, Paraguay, on Feb. 26, 2015.**  
**Associated Press**

for a moment of silence in their memory. And at the start of a U.N. Security Council meeting on peace in Africa, all those in the chamber stood in silent tribute to the fallen peacekeepers.

The secretary-general told the ceremony after laying a wreath at the Peacekeepers Memorial that what began 75 years ago "as a bold experiment" in the Mideast "is now a flagship enterprise of our organization." For civilians caught in conflict, he said, peacekeepers are "a beacon of hope and protection."

U.N. peacekeeping operations have grown dra-

matically. At the end of the Cold War in the early 1990s, there were 11,000 U.N. peacekeepers. By 2014, there were 130,000 in 16 far-flung peacekeeping operations. Today, 87,000 men and women serve in 12 conflict areas in Africa, Asia, Europe and the Middle East.

There have been two kinds of successes, U.N. peacekeeping chief Jean-Pierre Lacroix said in an interview Wednesday with The Associated Press.

Those are the long list of countries that have returned to a reasonable degree of stability with the support of U.N. peace-

keeping, including Liberia, Sierra Leone, Ivory Coast, Mozambique, Angola and Cambodia, and the countries where peacekeepers are not only monitoring but preserving cease-fires like in southern Lebanon and Cyprus.

As for failures, he pointed to the failure of U.N. peacekeepers to prevent the 1994 Rwanda genocide, which killed at least 800,000 ethnic Tutsis and Hutus, and the 1995 massacre of at least 8,000 mostly Muslim men and boys at Srebrenica during the war in Bosnia, Europe's only acknowledged genocide since the Holocaust during

World War II.

The U.N.'s reputation has also been tarnished by numerous allegations that peacekeepers charged with protecting civilians sexually abused women and children, including in Central African Republic and Congo. Another high-profile blunder was the cholera epidemic in Haiti that began in 2010 after U.N. peacekeepers introduced the bacteria into the country's largest river by sewage runoff from their base.

Despite that, Richard Gowan, the International Crisis Group's U.N. director, said "U.N. peacekeeping has a surprisingly decent track record."

While many people understandably focus on the Rwanda and Srebrenica disasters, he said, "the U.N. has done a good job of tamping down crises, protecting civilians and rebuilding broken states in cases from the Suez crisis in the 1950s to Liberia in the 2000s."

"The result of that is that we're not able to achieve what I call the ultimate goal of peacekeeping — to be deployed, support a political process that moves forward, and then gradually roll down when that political process is completed," he said. "We cannot do that because peace processes are not moving, or they're not going fast enough." □

## Greek caretaker Prime Minister sworn in, to head government

**ATHENS, Greece (AP)** — Senior judge Ioannis Sarvas was sworn in Thursday as Greece's caretaker Prime Minister who will head the country until new national elections are held in about a month. Sarvas, 66, took over from center-right Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis, who won a landslide victory in parliamentary elections on May 21 but was unable to form a government. Although

his New Democracy party beat the leftwing main opposition Syriza by 20 points the biggest margin in 50 years the one-off electoral system left it five seats short of a majority in the 300-seat Parliament. Syriza and the third-placed Pasok Socialists also proved unable to form a coalition. Therefore new elections will be held, with June 25 seen as the likeliest date, under a different electoral system which

gives the first party up to 50 extra seats in Parliament. Mitsotakis hopes that vote will secure him a governing majority. Sarvas will head a 16-member caretaker government, in which a former Greek ambassador to the U.S., Vassilios Kaskarelis, will be Foreign Minister. The key finance ministry will be headed by economist Theodore Pelagidis, deputy governor of Greece's central bank. □



**Greek Caretaker Prime Minister Ioannis Sarvas, speaks with outgoing Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis during a handover ceremony at Maximos mansion, in Athens, Thursday, May 25, 2023.**

**Associated Press**



# Iran unveils latest version of ballistic missile amid tensions over nuclear program

By **MEHDI FATTAHI and JON GAMBRELL**

**Associated Press**

**TEHRAN, Iran (AP)** — Iran unveiled on Thursday what it called the latest iteration of its liquid-fueled Khorramshahr ballistic missile amid wider tensions with the West over its nuclear program. Authorities showed off the Khorramshahr-4 to journalists at an event in Tehran, with the missile on a truck-mounted launcher. Defense Minister Gen. Mohammad Reza Ashtiani said the missile could be prepared for launch in a short period.

"One of the prominent characteristics of this missile is its ability to evade radar detection and penetrate enemy air defense systems, thanks to its low radar signature," the general told journalists. "This missile has the capability to utilize various warheads for different missions."

Iranian officials described the missile as having a 2,000-kilometer (1,240-mile) range with a 1,500-kilogram (3,300-pound) warhead. They also released undated video footage purportedly showing a successful launch of the missile.



In this picture released by the Iranian Defense Ministry on Thursday, May 25, 2023, Khorramshahr-4 missile is launched at an undisclosed location, Iran.

The Khorramshahr has the heaviest payload of Iran's ballistic missile fleet, which analysts say may be designed to keep the weapon under a 2,000-kilometer range limit imposed by the country's supreme leader. That puts most of the Middle East in range, but falls short of Western Europe.

The Khorramshahr-4 is named after an Iranian city that was the scene of heavy fighting during the Iran-Iraq War in the 1980s.

Iraq seized the city in the oil-rich southwestern province of Khuzestan at the start of the war, but Iran retook it over a year later.

During the event, loudspeakers blared the "Symphony of the Epic of Khorramshahr," an orchestral composition marking Iranian soldiers ending the Iraqi siege of the city during the war. Tehran created its ballistic missile program after suffering through Iraqi Scud missile attacks in the

conflict and as a hedge against its Western-armed neighbors as embargoes have kept it from accessing modern attack aircraft.

The missile also is called Kheibar, after a Jewish fortress conquered by the Muslims in the 7th century in what is now Saudi Arabia.

Regional tensions likely played a role in Iran's missile display Thursday. A miniature example of Jerusalem's golden Dome of

the Rock on the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound, a holy site in both Islam and Judaism that Jews call the Temple Mount, stood next to the mobile launcher.

Iran views Israel as its arch-enemy and arming anti-Israeli militant groups in the Palestinian territories and surrounding countries. Tensions between the two nations are high, particularly as Iran enriches uranium closer than ever to weapons-grade levels. The Khorramshahr would be able to reach Israel.

Iran made a point, however, to keep the truck that transports the missile covered up during the event. Its missile program has been targeted for sabotage in the past and Iran has previously used foreign-sourced vehicles to tow such massive missile systems.

It remains unclear, however, why the missile has been called Khorramshahr-4 as only two other variants of the missile are publicly known. It is modeled after North Korea's Musudan ballistic missile, which is believed to have up to a 4,000-kilometer (2,485-mile) range with a 500-kilogram (1,100 pound) payload. □

**Associated Press**

## U.S. senator hopes Serbia adopts Russia sanctions

By **JOVANA GEC**

**Associated Press**

**BELGRADE, Serbia (AP)** — A U.S. senator on Thursday said he hopes Serbia would adopt Western sanctions against Russia over its invasion of Ukraine, telling the Balkan country that "there is no future" in an alliance with Moscow.

"Russia's invasion has been an absolute disaster and my belief is that Russia is ultimately going to lose this conflict," Sen. Chris Murphy (D-Conn) told reporters in the Serbian capital Belgrade. Serbia is the only country in Europe that has not imposed any sanctions on Russia.

"The future for Serbia is with the European Union and with the United States not with Russia," Murphy said. "There is no future with Russia. They (Russia) are going to be devastated, a permanent pariah internationally after this invasion."

Though Serbia is formally seeking EU membership and has condemned the invasion at the United Nations, Belgrade has maintained its historically friendly relations with Moscow. Murphy's visit to Belgrade came as Serbia's staunchly pro-Russian intelligence chief Aleksandar Vulin travelled to Moscow for a security conference. Serbia

is also one of few countries with direct air links to Russian cities and is almost completely reliant on Russia for energy supplies.

Asked about Vulin's visit to Russia, Murphy replied that "obviously Russia is searching for friends these days," but that it is not "constructive" for any nation to stand by Russian President Vladimir Putin.

"What Russia has done in Ukraine is unacceptable," said Murphy. "I really hope that Serbia's future is with the European Union, it is connected to the United States and the quicker that we can have better, more close alignment on Russia



U.S. Sen. Chris Murphy, D-Conn. speaks during a press conference in the U.S. embassy in Belgrade, Serbia, Thursday, May 25, 2023.

**Associated Press**

policy the better."

Murphy, along with senator Gary Peters, met in Belgrade with Serbia's President Aleksandar Vucic and Prime Minister Ana Brnabic. The meetings also focused on Western efforts to push

forward normalization of relations between Serbia and Kosovo.

The senators' week-long visit to the region also featured visits to Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro and North Macedonia. □



## Be extra cautious of the current surge of Dengue fever on the island

(Oranjestad)—In the month of April and May 2023, Latin American countries such as Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Peru and islands in the Caribbean like Puerto Rico and Guadeloupe, has reported a drastic increase in the number of Dengue Fever cases in their country. This ongoing situation has the Department of Public Health of Aruba (DVG) on high alert and preparation, considering the influx of tourists from different regions that the island receives daily. This is why it is also important for you to take precautions.

Currently, Aruba's index of

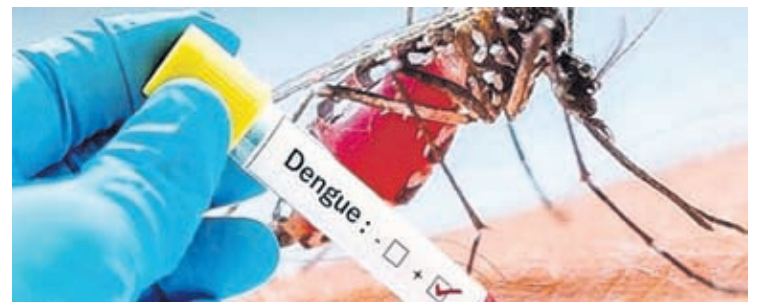
mosquitoes carrying the Dengue disease is relatively low because of the lack of rain. Despite this, personnel from the DVG sect specializing in dengue (GKMB) still encounter mosquito habitats within the community. These are found, for example, plant saucers, and empty buckets with rain or AC water. Since the rain season on Aruba stretches from June to December, it is highly recommended for both locals and tourist to mitigate the breeding of these insects and avoid any places where mosquito habitats may be prevalent. If we don't take care, we may soon also experience

a drastic surge of Dengue Fever on the island.

In the first five month of 2023, the DVG sect of Epidemiology and Research has received a total of 24 reports of possible Dengue cases. Of these 24 reports, ten cases were confirmed as Dengue Fever.

Not only is it important to avoid contracting Dengue Fever, but it is also important to realize what symptoms may appear in the case that you are infected. These symptoms include:

- High Fever
- Headache
- Stomach pain and



- nausea
- Joint and muscle pain
- Eye pain
- Skin rash

can receive care at Urgent Care Aruba, located at Noord.

The Department of Public Health is asking all locals and visitors that present with high fever and two or more of the symptoms mentioned to contact their doctor—or for visitors, you

For more information, please visit the website of the Department of Public Health Aruba at [www.dvg.aw](http://www.dvg.aw), or call at +297 5224200, or send an e-mail at [servicio@dvg.aw](mailto:servicio@dvg.aw) □

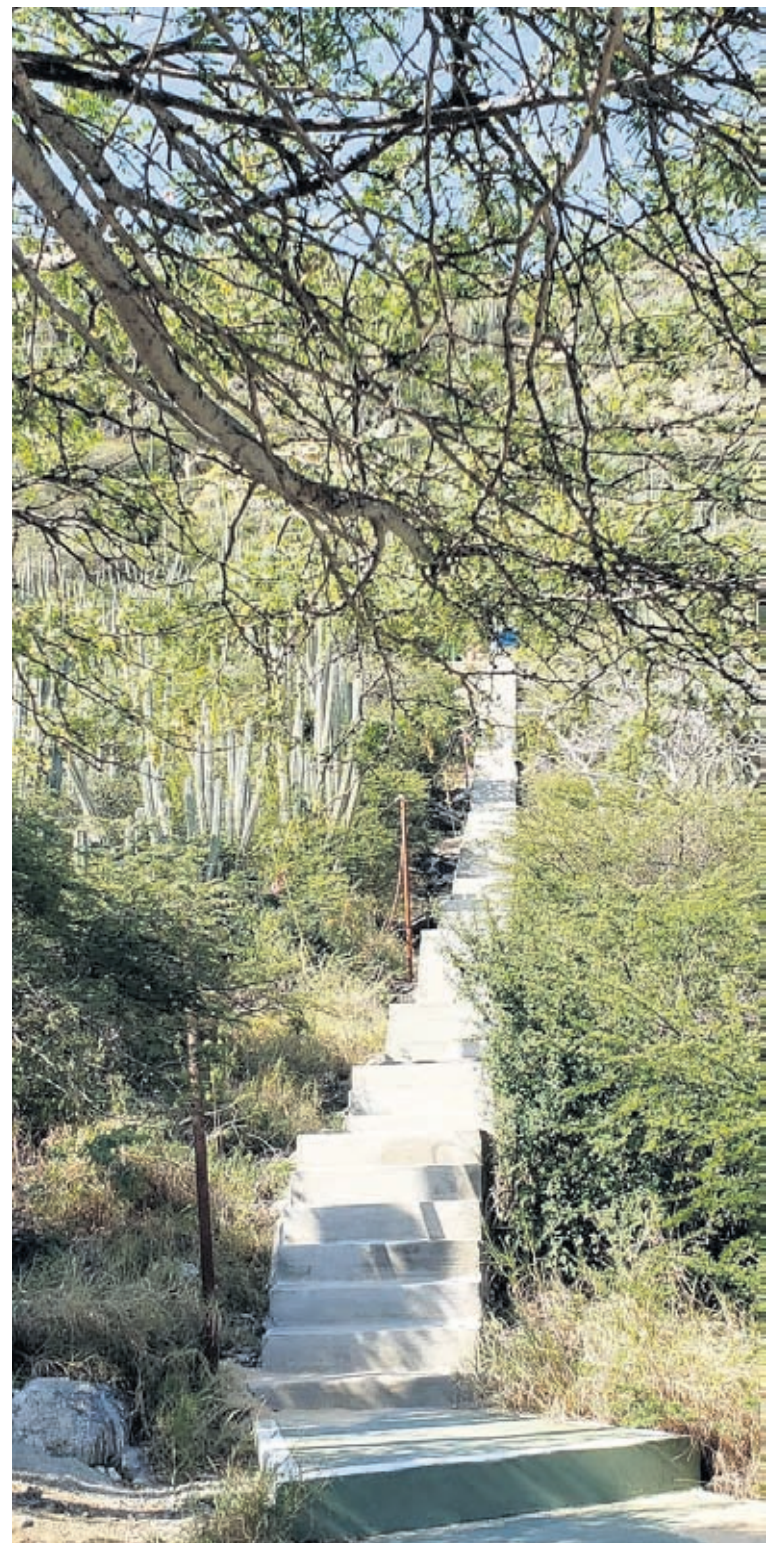
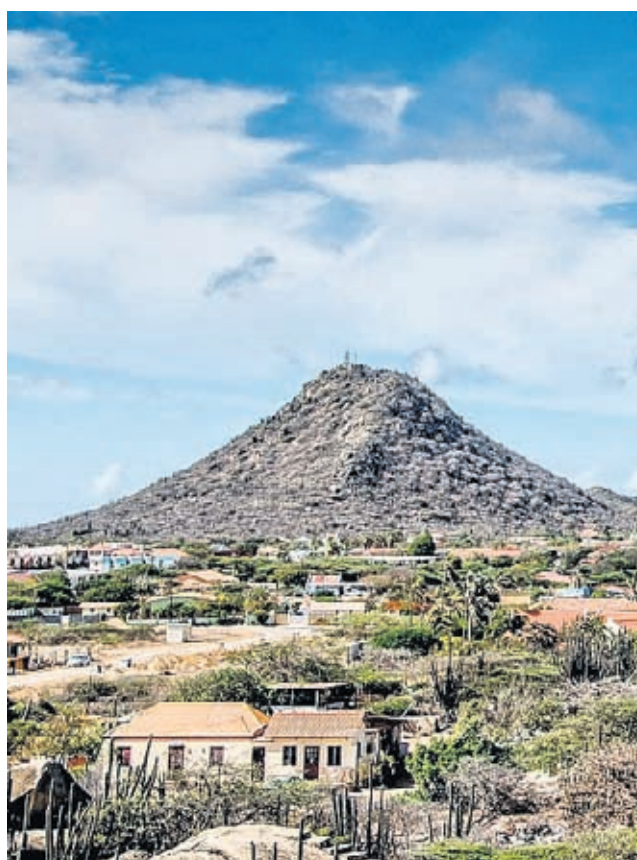
## Enjoy one of the best views on Aruba at the top of the Hooiberg Hill

(Oranjestad)—If you are a regular hiker, or maybe want to spice up your morning work out session, then you might enjoy one of the most popular climbing sites on the island: The Hooiberg Hill. Accompanied with a 600-step staircase, this hill overlooks a great part of the island, the Caribbean sea, and sometimes even the Santa Anna mountain located in the coastal state of Falcon in Venezuela, providing one of the best views you can get on Aruba.

located at the center district of the island, Santa Cruz, the Hooiberg Hill is the second highest point on the island at 165 meters above sea level (or about 540 feet above sea level). The highest point is Jamanota Hill at 189 meters (620 feet), located in the Arikok National Park.

The staircase that run on the side of the hill was first built in 1951, when Mr. Eduardo Tromp constructed it. At that time, the staircase consisted of 900 steps. Over time, as the steps faced erosion, the government decided to renovate these stairs in 1991. This new project delivered the newer staircase with only 587 steps. However, don't be fooled—it may still be a work out to get on top. In addition, there is now a gazebo placed halfway up the stair for a little rest. The view at this resting stop is also a sight to see.

The best time to climb the hill would be early in the morning or right before sunset, as it may not be as hot. However, the hill is of course open all day, every day. □





## Soul Beach Music Festival Hosted by Aruba; Good Vibes Only! Live Music by The Roots and Anthony Hamilton featuring local sensation WATRA

**Oranjestad - Set your sights on higher ground and indulge in harmonious vibrations at the Soul Beach Music Festival Hosted by Aruba. Memorial Day Weekend, May 24 – 29, 2023, the stars appear center stage for nightly shows displaying high-volume performances by chart-topping talent, including The Roots, Jill Scott, Lucky Daye, Anthony Hamilton, Deon Cole & Tiffany Haddish.**

Soul Beach Music Festival Hosted by Aruba brings a tour de force line-up of unwavering excellence, singers/musicians/comedians/entertainers, sure to quench the soul of festival attendees from all over the world in Aruba's paradise.

May 27th Saturday Music Concert:  
The Roots and Anthony Hamilton  
May 28th Sunday Music Concert:  
Jill Scott and Lucky Daye

"The Soul Beach Music Festival is a one-of-a-kind entertainment experience that electrifies our One happy island. We are honored to be hosting the 21st anniversary of the largest music festival in the Caribbean" said Ronella Croes, CEO of Aruba Tourism Authority. "The festival continues to bring top international artists and performers to the island, and we can't wait for locals and travelers to experience the magic of Soul Beach."

Dive into destination dreams in Aruba's oasis and explore the most welcoming adventure replete with outdoor attractions primed for the ultimate encounter with nature. A true cosmopolitan getaway intertwined in authentic Caribbean culture; Aruba offers an array of idyllic beachside restaurants with seating at the water's edge to serene coffee shops serving up boastful brews, but there is so much more to explore beyond the shorelines. Travelers are beckoned to experience an epicurean affair of culinary indulgences along with pristine art displays, a national park, and expansive accommodations showcasing hotels and villas reminiscent of intimate secluded retreats. A premium shopping district transports fashion lovers into infinite odyssey surrounded by cool yacht sensations. Get ready to give free rein to the extraordinary at Soul Beach Music Festival Hosted by Aruba. This Memorial Day weekend, Aruba is the place to see and

be seen!

"We are thrilled to kick off our 21st edition of the Soul Beach Music Festival Hosted by Aruba with such a star-studded line up, Mark Adkins, CEO & Executive Producer of Soul Beach Festival Productions. "Festivalgoers have been buzzing with excitement on social and have started arriving early this year on the beautiful island of Aruba. We give thanks to all our partners but a special salute to the Aruba Tourism Authority for all these years of commitment which has grown the festival to attract over 7000 tourists for this Memorial Day Weekend. Get ready to ride the wave and enjoy a week while creating a lifetime of memories."

### The Roots

Since their debut in 1993, The Roots have been one of the most prolific rap groups and progressive acts in contemporary music. For the past 30 years, The Roots have achieved massive success with successive studio releases reaching platinum and gold status as well as three Grammy wins. They continue to challenge the restrictions of music and genre, partnering as the band for The Tonight Show with Jimmy Fallon.

### Anthony Hamilton

Anthony Hamilton is a platinum selling, Grammy award-winning singer-songwriter. For the past 20 years, Hamilton has delivered a multitude of beloved hits, including Can't Let Go, The Point of It all, Cool, and Charlene. His latest album, Love Is The New Black, was released in 2021 and signified the launch of Hamilton's label, My Music Box.

### WATRA

WATRA is a multilingual songwriter and musician. Born in Amsterdam, being raised on Aruba and having Surinamese-Haitian roots WATRA has always been surrounded by culturally rich environments. In her musical journey she has composed, recorded music and performed at various festivals. WATRA performs along with four creative musicians that inspire her such as pianist Kyle Winklaar, guitarist Serghio Janssen, drummer Jeremy Bonarriba and bassplayer Reno Steba. What this band have in common is that they are all educators, composers, and passionate about sharing this universal language we call music. □





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## Aruba Tourism Authority honored loyal visitors at Playa Linda Beach Resort

The Aruba Tourism Authority recently recognized Distinguished Ambassadors of Aruba. Presenting the Ambassadors with the Distinguished certificate as a token of appreciation.

The honoring certification program is granted to ambassadors, to recognize, the loyalty, friendships, and visits to Aruba. For consecutively choosing Aruba as their preferred vacation destination each year. The Honoring certification program has three levels, which are divided according to the number of consecutive years visiting the island of Aruba.

### Honoring Levels:

Distinguished Ambassadors: 10> years  
Goodwill Ambassadors: 20> years  
Emerald Ambassadors: 35> years

### Honoree were:

Distinguished Ambassadors 10> years:  
Kenneth King & Dorothy Mc Killop residents of New York, United States (have been visiting Aruba for 16 years consecutively).

William Peters residents of Florida, United States (have been visiting Aruba for 18 years consecutively).

Ms. Marouska Heyliger representing the Aruba Tourism Authority, and members of Playa Linda Beach Resort bestowed the certification of the Ambassadors of Aruba. The honorees were presented with the official certificate, and with memorable gifts.

On behalf of the Government of Aruba, we would like to express our gratitude and appreciation to all the Ambassadors for making Aruba their preferred vacation destination for so many years. We are so thankful to have had such wonderful Ambassadors as our visitors after all these years! Aruba is unquestionably their home away from home!

According to Honorees these are the top reasons for returning to Aruba:  
Dorothy & Kenneth's reasons:  
Sun  
Friends  
Food  
Safety  
Drinks



William's reasons:

Sun  
Sand  
Sea

Friends  
Jell-O Shots

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Aruba Today is delighted to share to its readers a new segment called "Beauty and the Beach", where we take a minute to honor our guests who have decided to spend their vacation on our beautiful and warm island.

In this edition, we'd like to give a shout out to **Robin and friends from Massachusetts**. They said they love the beach and the weather. Aruba is always proud to host all families and guests. We at Aruba Today encourage any visitor of the island to send in their pictures and/or messages; who knows? You might get on the cover!

*This segment is sponsored by Alhambra Casino and Shops.*









## Fruit Loose & Veggie Boost: Aruban fruits and vegetables

**Fresh fruits make a tropical holiday's picture complete. Whether you see the mangoes hanging in the trees or the fresh fruit cocktail on the side table of your pool bed, the link is there: you are in the tropics. Aruba grows her own fruits and veggies and there are some pretty out-of-space local species you may never had heard of, but really healthy and delicious.**

### Mispel

This is a fruit with a character (5-10 cm/2-4 inches). It does not ripe until it is picked or falls off the tree. Mispel is hard with a sandpaper like texture when immature, soft and juicy when ripe. It's technically a berry, but contains a skin similar to that of a kiwi. It's grainy and sweet, with a light, musky flavor. The sap or gum from the tree is also a source of 'chicle' the original ingredient used to make chewing gum. Rich in tannins, antioxidants shown to contain anti-inflammatory compounds, and vitamin C, essential for healthy immune function. Season: year- round.

### Kenepa



Ovoid green fruit that grows in bunches on trees up to 30m high. The fruit is related to the lychee and have tight, thin but rigid skins. Inside the skin is the tart, tangy, or sweet pulp of the fruit covering a large seed. The pulp is usually cream or orange colored. Kenepa strengthens the immune system, and prevents the reproduction of bacteria and viruses in the body. This fruit is highly recommended to treat lung infections and urinary tract infections. It also helps to cure insomnia and rejuvenates the nervous system. Season: the fruit typically ripen during the summer.

### Druif



There is no chance you did not bump into one of the sea grape trees while spending your vacation on Aruba. The sea grape plant is often used in ocean-side landscaping in sandy soil

right on the beach and it produces clusters of fruit that resemble grapes. Are sea grapes edible? Yes, they are. Animals enjoy sea grapes and humans can eat them as well, and they are used to make jam. They contain very low calories and sugar, enabling good bacterium to digest food and excrete waste quickly which is effective in preventing constipation. Season: Sep-Oct.

### Shimarucu



Maybe Aruba's most popular wild fruit tree. You may have noticed cars at the side of the road and people picking those red berries. Well, that's Shimarucu. The local habit to stop for these delicious fruits goes from generation to generation. Its fruit's degree of sour depends on the amount of rain it gets. Red Shimarucus tend to taste better than orange. The fruit has super power: a true vitamin bomb. Adults only need to eat 3-4 of these berries to meet their daily recommended amount of Vitamin C. Season: Rainy months (Oct-Jan).

### Tamarind



A delicious, sweet fruit that has a wide variety of uses and applications, both for medicinal and culinary purposes. It is a medium-sized bushy tree with evergreen leaves and fruit that develops in pods characterized by long, brown shells. Inside is a sticky, fleshy, juicy pulp, which is the Tamarind fruit. Both sweet and sour in taste, the fruit contains a significant level of vitamin C, as well as vitamin E, B vitamins, calcium, iron, phosphorous, potassium, manganese, and dietary fiber. There are also a number of organic compounds that make tamarind a powerful antioxidant and anti-inflammatory agent. Season: March.

When it comes to veggies the island certainly offers a home-grown selection. They taste delicious and have their specific talents to boost your immune system. Start the day with a 'batida' (smoothie) enriched with a local veggie touch or select your restaurant that offers local vegetable dishes to get the real pure taste of it.

### Comcomber chiquito



This is a sort of local squash, but looks like a cucumber with prickly skin. The taste however is bitterer than the cucumber and the vegetable is smaller in size but bigger in width. Inside is a soft, fleshy pulp and seeds, just like the cucumber. Comcomber chiquito is grown in the island and used in salads and 'stoba' (stew) or on its own in vinegar. The veggie contains multiple B vitamins, including vitamin B1, vitamin B5, and vitamin B7 (biotin). B vitamins are known to help ease feelings of anxiety and buffer some of the damaging effects of stress. Additionally this veggie is rich in two of the most basic elements needed for healthy digestion: water and fiber. Season: year- round.

### Yambo

Family of Okra, also known as 'lady's fingers': a green flowering plant. Okra belongs to the same plant family as hibiscus and cotton. A classic favorite dish in Aruba is Sopi di yambo. It has long been favored as a food for the health-conscious. It contains potassium, vitamin B, vitamin C, folic acid, and calcium. It's low in calories and has a high dietary fiber content. Recently, a new benefit of including okra in your diet is being considered. Okra has been suggested to help manage blood sugar in cases of type 1, type 2, and gestational diabetes. Season: year-round.

### Bonch'i Cunucu

A long, small bean, boiled for a side dish or snack. Long beans have a chewy, crunchy texture—more so than snap beans—and a flavor reminiscent of the dry navy bean or asparagus. Besides stir-fry, soups and salads, the long bean is a good choice for stewing, braising (to remain chewy and firm), sautéing, shallow frying, and deep frying. With cooking, the long bean's bean flavor intensifies. Long beans are low in calories, about 45 calories per cup, and rich in vitamin A and also contain vitamin C and potassium. Season: year-round.

### Pampuna

In the endless summer of Caribbean living we only have to concern ourselves with a wet season and a dry season. Still we do indulge heavily in the pleasures of pumpkin and enjoy Caribbean pumpkin recipes year round. A popular dish in Aruban restaurants is Sopa Di Pampuna, don't miss it. This dish is made of pumpkin soup, and parsley. Pumpkins are rich in flavonoid polyphenolic antioxidants such as xanthin, lutein and carotenes and also contain vitamins. Pumpkin seeds are a good source of omega-3 fatty acids, vitamins, minerals and proteins. Pumpkins are used to make desserts, breads and soups. □



## Unique fauna of Aruba

For a small island, Aruba sure has a lot of unique treasures. Among these, we have some subspecies of animals that are unique to our island. These have evolved to perfectly adapt to our desert climate and make Aruba their home. At the same time, they are part of what makes Aruba truly one of a kind.

### Cascabel (rattlesnake, *Crotalus durissus unicolor*)

According to the Arikok National Park, Aruba knows two kinds of snakes, the Santanero and the Cascabel. The cascabel belongs to the rattlesnake family. The cascabel is the only venomous snake from Aruba. It has a length of 65cm to 100cm, and is about 4 to 5cm wide. Its color varies from light brown to grey-brown, and its underbelly is white. On its back there are marks that are a little darker, in the shape of diamonds.

Its reproduction is oviparous, meaning the offspring can hatch from their eggs just before, during or immediately after laying.

The cascabel lives mainly in the Arikok National Park. It likes to live in dark places, and is thus found hidden among the limestone rocks and under stones. As a defense mechanism, the cascabel uses its rattle as a warning, and it is not an aggressive animal.

The cascabel feeds on lizards, small mammals such as rats and mice. It paralyzes or kills its prey with its venom, which is injected through a bite. The enemies of the cascabel are donkeys, goats, humans

and cars. Humans are the biggest enemy of the cascabel, as they kill them and destroy their habitat for urbanization.

### Shoco (burrowing owl, *Athene cunicularia arubensis*)

The shoco is a small bird which is seldom seen. They are active during the day but are more active later in the day and at night for hunting. These owls have very good night vision and very good hearing. The shoco is the national symbol of Aruba.

The shoco has about 20cm of length, and the females are slightly heavier than the males. They are light brown in color, with many white spots. The belly of the Shoco is either white or light brown, and the shoco has striking yellow eyes. Its beak is yellow/green. Young owls do not have white spots and are lighter in color.

The nest of the shoco is a burrow in the ground. If the shoco cannot find a burrow, it will dig one in soft soil. The shoco lays one or two eggs every other day until all the eggs are laid – a shoco can lay up to four eggs. The first owlets hatch after three to four weeks. The shoco owl takes care of the owlets for three months until they leave the nest. Only a few owlets survive.

The owls dig burrows in the ground with low grass vegetation. An owl can live up to nine years.

Its defense mechanism is simply to fly away or retreat to its burrows. They eat mostly insects, mice and lizards, and the main

threats to their survival are boas – an invasive species introduced by humans as pets – and humans through destruction of their habitat.

### Prikichi (parakeet, *Aratinga pertinax*)

The Prikichi is the national bird of Aruba. On Aruba, Bonaire, and Curaçao, parakeets can be found, but each of the three islands has a different breed. The Yellow-shouldered Amazon parakeet that we have on Aruba is also found along the coast of Venezuela. Unfortunately, there is interbreeding between the breeds due to cage birds from, for example, Curaçao being released on Aruba. The parakeet population on Aruba is in danger due to extensive deforestation occurring on the island because of the growing population.

The prikichi weighs between 90 to 100 grams. It has a greenish-brown head with some yellow around the eye. The back and wings of the parakeet are dark green, and the underside of the body is a lighter shade of green. There is also a bit of blue in the wings. The parakeet's beak is gray/black.

Parakeets often use termite nests as breeding sites. Parakeets are found in all natural environments (mondi) of the island. It defends itself by flying away and loud cries. Parakeets eat seeds from the pods of the Kwihi tree, Divi Divi, and columnar cactus. They also consume natural fruits. Its main predators are boa constrictors, humans.

### Conew (cottontail rabbit, *Sylvilagus floridanus nigro-*



### nuchalis)

The Eastern Cottontail rabbit (*Sylvilagus floridanus*) was probably brought over to the island by Indian settlers thousands of years ago as a source of food. This rabbit, locally known as Conew, has spread all over the island and has become part of our ecosystem. The very adaptable Conew can live in a wide variety of habitats, including Aruba's xeric scrublands, where it typically grazes on weeds and grasses.

The Aruban Conew has a brownish grey color and a distinctive white belly. This white fur extends to the bottom of the tail which becomes visible as the rabbit runs. These rabbits can grow up to approximately 40 centimeters in length over their short lifespan of 3 years. Cottontail rabbits reach reproductive maturity when they are just 2 to 3 months old. A female rabbit, called a doe, finds a suitable nest spot under a shrub or rocks and lines it with fur. She can have an average of 3 to 4 litters per year averaging 5 young each. The doe only visits her young once or twice a day to nurse her babies for a period of 2 to 3 weeks.

The young reach independence at 4 to 5 weeks.

The Aruban Conew is an endangered species and protected by Aruban law. The Conew is thought to have drastically declined due to an increase in human activities, habitat fragmentation and predation by the invasive Boa constrictor as well as feral cats and dogs. However, recently there seem to be more rabbit sightings in rural and wilderness areas and also in the National Park. This could be linked to a recent decline of the invasive Boa population after the long period of drought. As the Conew can reproduce very quickly, a short break in predation pressure can lead to a fast increase of rabbits. Sadly, the Boas are back on the rise again with the truly wet rainy seasons we have recently experienced. This could cause a new decline in the Conew population that was just starting to recover.

These are but a few of Aruba's beautiful inhabitant, which we must all contribute to protect. For more information, visit <https://www.arubanationalpark.org/main/flora-fauna/>





# CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS 46 Fire

1 Ready product to hit

6 Espresso order

11 Dis-reputable

12 Was sore

13 Waffle topper

14 Sandwich start

15 Musk of Tesla

17 Sole

18 Cushy

20 "Fernando" group

22 Important time

23 Address

26 Nutball

28 Really dug

29 Thin

31 Genetic stuff

32 Campus bigwig

33 Bibliography abbr.

34 Blanched

36 Rigging support

38 Wonderland guest

40 Standard

43 Perfect

44 Paris subway

45 Grating sounds

DOWN

1 Cart

2 Belonging to thee

3 Blatant fictions

4 Ticket category

5 Keyboard goof

6 Research setting

7 Circus star

8 1990s Téa Leoni

9 Blue hue

10 Water whirl

11 Cart puller

12 Belonging to thee

13 Blatant fictions

14 Ticket category

15 Keyboard goof

16 Research setting

17 Circus star

18 1990s Téa Leoni

19 Blue hue

20 Water whirl

M	E	A	D	M	I	L	S	A	P
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Yesterday's answer

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11					12				
13					14				
		15			16		17		
18	13			20	21				
22			23					24	25
26			27		28				
29				30			31		
		32				33			
34	35			36	37				
38				39	40			41	42
43					44				
45					46				

5-26

A X Y D L B A A X R  
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

5-26

CRYPTOQUOTE

H Y K F J H T Z K J K U . C H H P

G M Q B M F . S Z K J H T U S Q M U V M K A

G M Q B Q B K C M V K J H T ' Z K

C M D M F R ? — X H X I S Z C K J

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: YOU CAN'T GET SPOILED IF YOU DO YOUR OWN IRONING. — MERYL STREEP

## Expect big crowds for the summer travel season -- and big prices, too

By DAVID KOENIG  
AP Airlines Writer

The unofficial start of the summer travel season is here, with airlines hoping to avoid the chaos of last year and travelers scrounging for ways to save a few bucks on pricey airfares and hotel rooms.

Some travelers say they will settle for fewer trips than they hoped to take, or they will drive instead of fly. Others are finding different money-saving sacrifices.

Stephanie Hanrahan thought she'd save money by planning ahead for her daughter's birthday trip to Disney World in Florida. Instead, it ended up costing the same as the Dallas-area family's trip for four to California last summer, so now her husband and son are staying home.

"We just had to grit our teeth," said Hanrahan, a writer and speaker who also runs a nonprofit, as she and daughter Campbell waited for their flight last week at Dallas Love Field.

The number of people going through U.S. airports hit pandemic-era highs last weekend, and those records are almost certain to be broken over the Memorial Day holiday.

AAA predicts that 37 million Americans will drive at least 50 miles (80 kilometers) from home this weekend, an increase of more than 2 million from Memorial Day last year but still below pre-pandemic numbers in 2019.

The Transportation Security Administration expects to screen 10 million travelers between Friday and Monday, a 14% increase over the holiday in 2022 and slightly more than in 2019.



A Southwest Airlines customer service representative, left, assists a traveler at the ticketing counter at Love Field airport, Friday, May 19, 2023, in Dallas.

Associated Press

With more travel comes more expense. The average rate for a U.S. hotel room last week was \$157 a night, up from \$150 in the same week last year, according to hotel data provider STR.

And the average daily rate for other short-term rentals such as Airbnb and Vrbo rose to \$316 last month, up 1.4% from a year ago, according to AirDNA, which tracks the industry.

There is a bit of good news for drivers, however: The national average for a gallon of regular was \$3.56 at midweek, down from \$4.60 at this time last year, according to AAA. Renting a car is also cheaper than a year ago, when some popular destinations ran out of vehicles. Travel company Expedia said larger inventories let the companies rent more cars at lower prices.

For air travelers, airline industry officials say carriers have fixed problems that contributed to a surge in flight cancellations and delays last summer, when 52,000 flights were nixed from June through August.

Airlines have hired about 30,000 workers since then, including thousands of pilots, and they are using bigger planes to reduce flights but not the number of seats.

"I don't have the hubris to tell you exactly how the summer is going to go, but we have prepared and we have a robust plan for it," said Andrew Watterson, chief operating officer at Southwest Airlines, which struggled at times over the summer of 2022 and suffered an epic meltdown around Christmas, canceling nearly 17,000 flights.

David Seymour, the chief operating officer of American Airlines, said his staff has fine-tuned a system it uses to predict the impact of storms on major airports and devise a plan for recovering from disruptions. He said it is reducing cancellations.

"It's going to be a solid summer for us," Seymour said.

In a report released last month, the Government Accountability Office blamed airlines for an increase in flight cancellations as travel recovered from the pandemic. It also said airlines are taking longer to recover from disruptions such as storms.

Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg says the government will hold airlines responsible to treat passengers fairly when the carriers cause cancellations or long delays. □

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# Virgin Galactic completes final test flight

By **SUSAN MONTOYA BRYAN**

Associated Press

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. (AP)

— Virgin Galactic completed what's expected to be its final test flight Thursday before taking paying customers on brief trips to space, marking what the space tourism company described as a "fantastic achievement."

Six of the company's employees, including two pilots, landed at Spaceport America in southern New Mexico after the short up-and-down flight that included a few minutes of weightlessness. It took about an hour for the mother ship to carry the spaceplane to an altitude of 44,500 feet (13,563 meters), where it was released and fired its rocket motor to make the final push.

"Successful boost, **WE HAVE REACHED SPACE!**" Virgin Galactic tweeted.

It reached an altitude of 54.2 miles (87 kilometers) before gliding back down to the runway, according to the company.

Jamila Gilbert, who grew up in southern New Mexico and leads the company's internal communications, was among those on board who were evaluating what it will be like for paying customers.

"It is hard to put into words what this experience was like, but I'm sure I'll spend the rest of my life trying," Gilbert said in a statement released after the flight. "... As one of the very few non-technical people to fly to space, my role in this mission marks a sea change in who can go to space, and is a promising sign of the opportunities Virgin Galactic and the commercial space sector are ushering in."

The flight came nearly two years after founder Richard Branson beat fellow billionaire and Amazon founder Jeff Bezos and rocket company Blue Origin into space. Bezos ended up flying nine days later from West Texas and Blue



This photo released by Virgin Galactic shows a view of Earth from Virgin Galactic's rocket plane as it reaches an altitude of more than 54 miles during a test flight on Thursday, May 25, 2023.

Associated Press

Origin has since launched several passenger trips. Federal aviation authorities banned Virgin Galactic launches after Branson's flight to investigate a mishap.

Virgin Galactic has been working for more than a decade to send paying passengers on short space hops and in 2021 finally won the federal government's approval.

The next step will be for Virgin Galactic to analyze data from Thursday's flight and inspect the planes and other equipment as the company prepares for commercial service, possi-

bly as soon as late June.

The initial commercial flight will include members of the Italian Air Force who will conduct experiments. Next will come customers who purchased tickets years ago for their chance at weightlessness aboard a winged spacecraft that launches from the belly of an airplane.

About 800 tickets have been sold over the past decade, with the initial batch going for \$200,000 each. Tickets now cost \$450,000 per person.

Virgin Galactic has reached space five times since 2018 and will be aim-

ing for 400 flights per year from Spaceport America once it finishes building its next class of rocket-powered planes at a facility in neighboring Arizona. □



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### TRAVEL INFO

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Tel. 582 5051

Alcoholics Anonymous  
Tel. 736 2952

Narcotics Anonymous  
Tel. 583 8989

Fundacion Contra Violencia  
Relacional Tel. 583 5400

Centre for Diabetes  
Tel. 524 8888

Child Abuse Prevention  
Tel. 582 4433

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Phone Directory Tel. 118



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**President Calvin Coolidge signs a baseball for Hall of Fame pitcher Walter Johnson as other members of the Senators look on in 1924.**

**Associated Press**

**By CHRIS MEGERIAN and JOSH BOAK**

**Associated Press**

**WASHINGTON (AP) —**

President Calvin Coolidge wasn't as big a baseball fan as his wife, Grace. But even Silent Cal got swept up in the excitement of the Washington Senators' unexpectedly successful season in 1924. After the team clinched the American League pennant, the players swung by the White House to shake hands and pose for pictures with Coolidge.

It was the beginning of what would eventually become a tradition of victorious athletes visiting the president, and it'll continue on Friday when Joe Biden hosts the championship

men's and women's college basketball teams.

But what started as a non-partisan rite of passage has become increasingly tangled up in politics, a shift that some peg to Bill Clinton's presidency.

Tom Lehman, a professional golfer, declined a White House invitation and described Clinton as "a draft dodging baby killer."

"That's really when it started," said Fred Frommer, a former Associated Press journalist who has written about the history of sports and politics.

There were scattered protests after that a member of the Baltimore Ravens, for example, refused to visit with the rest of his football team because President

## Sports no sure respite from politics when title-winning athletes visit the White House

Barack Obama supported abortion rights but clashes proliferated under President Donald Trump. When members of the Golden State Warriors suggested they would spurn a White House visit after winning the NBA title, Trump announced that the invitation was being withdrawn. Some of the players instead visited the National Museum of African American History and Culture with local students.

More and more athletes started facing questions about whether they were willing to visit the White House. Frommer, who wrote "You Gotta Have Heart," a book about Washington and baseball, said trips became "a bit of a litmus test."

Biden, who has promised to turn down the temperature in Washington, has largely avoided such clashes. But sparks flew in preparation for Friday's visit with the women's team from Louisiana State.

After the Tigers won the NCAA championship this year, first lady Jill Biden made an offhand sugges-

tion that a second invitation should also be extended to the team they defeated, the Iowa Hawkeyes.

LSU star Angel Reese called the idea "A JOKE" and said she would rather visit with Obama and his wife, Michelle. The LSU team largely is Black, while Iowa's top player, Caitlin Clark, is white, as are most of her teammates.

"At the beginning we were hurt. It was emotional for us," Reese told ESPN in a subsequent interview. "Because we know how hard we worked all year for everything."

Nothing came of the first lady's idea, and only the Tigers were invited (and only champion Connecticut on the men's side) Reese ultimately said she wasn't going to skip the White House visit. "I'm a team player," Reese said. "I'm going to do what's best for the team." While Reese didn't turn down the invitation, another group of champions will be skipping the White House altogether. Georgia's football team said it could not make it next month because of a

scheduling conflict.

Coach Kirby Smart insisted that the decision had nothing to do with politics, saying the invitation conflicted with hosting a youth camp around the same time.

But who attends and who doesn't is closely watched in the country's charged political atmosphere.

The politicization of White House visits has overlapped with what Boykoff describes as the "athlete empowerment era." At a time when the country has experienced sweeping social movements, such as Black Lives Matter and #MeToo, athletes feel more confident using their platforms to share political messages, and they can use social media as a bullhorn.

"We're in a new era now," he said. Boykoff said White House events were once considered a "family friendly photo opportunity," offering presidents a chance to show their lighter side. But given the country's hyperpolarization, he said, the tradition may eventually run its course. And athletes may want the platform for themselves. □

## Thomas celebrates 37th birthday by retaining Giro lead

**VAL DI ZOLDO, Italy (AP) —**

Geraint Thomas celebrated his 37th birthday with another strong ride in the mountains to retain the pink jersey in the 18th stage of the Giro d'Italia on Thursday.

Thomas crossed immediately behind Primož Roglič, who moved up from third place to second.

"The legs have been good," Thomas said. "Need to enjoy these moments."

João Almeida dropped from second to third overall after losing 21 seconds over the 161-kilometer (100-mile) route from Oderzo to Val di Zoldo, which included two first-category climbs followed by two second-category climbs in the finale

including an uphill finish.

Thomas the 2018 Tour de France champion leads Roglič by 29 seconds and Almeida by 39 seconds.

"It's a pleasant day. I take time on Almeida and didn't get dropped by Primož," Thomas said. "I felt pretty good, always under control but Primož obviously went hard. It wasn't easy. ... I just want to be consistent until the end."

"Primož, João and I are pretty similar. They each had a bad day and it could be me tomorrow. I don't get carried away, I just do the basics," Thomas added. "I'm sure it will go down to the TT on the last mountain day."

Italian champion Filippo

Zanna won the stage ahead of fellow breakaway rider Thibaut Pinot in a two-man sprint.

With only two more climbing stages remaining before the mostly ceremonial finish in Rome on Sunday, Thomas is poised to become the oldest Giro winner in history beating the record of Fiorenzo Magni, who was 34 when he won in 1955.

Chris Horner holds the record for oldest Grand Tour champion, set when he won the Spanish Vuelta in 2013 at 41.

However, Thomas will still be tested over the next two days.

Stage 19 on Friday is considered perhaps the race's

toughest, a 183-kilometer (114-mile) leg from Longarone to Tre Cime Di Lavaredo featuring five

major climbs. Then there's a mountain time trial on Saturday. □



**Italy's Filippo Zanna celebrates winning the 18th stage of the Giro D'Italia, tour of Italy cycling race, from Oderzo to Val di Zoldo, Italy, Thursday, May 25, 2023.**

**Associated Press**



## Deep trouble: Punchless Guardians being 'tested' by inept offense

By TOM WITHERS

AP Sports Writer

**CLEVELAND (AP)** — Terry Francona said the quiet part out loud.

After the Cleveland Guardians were shut out for the sixth time this season, Francona, the winningest manager in club history, was discussing White Sox pitcher Michael Kopech's tendency to give up home runs when Francona underscored one of his own team's biggest weaknesses.

"I know he's given up a lot of home runs," Francona said. "That's not something we do very well."

If it were only that.

One of baseball's best stories last season, the Guardians have fallen on hard times with troubling signs a recovery might not be forthcoming.

Most of the mojo that led the game's youngest squad to a 92-70 record and an unexpected AL Central title in 2022 has disappeared.

Cleveland is ranked last or near last in virtually every offensive category, and the Guardians have dropped seven games under .500 for the first time since Aug. 25, 2015, on their way to an 81-80 finish.

"We're all getting tested and I believe we're tough enough to fight through this, and we're going to find out because we are getting tested," Francona said after the Guardians were blanked 6-0 by the White Sox on Wednesday. "All of us."

A year ago, the Guardians maximized at-bats



Cleveland Guardians' Josh Bell reacts after striking out, next to Chicago White Sox catcher Yasmani Grandal during the fifth inning of a baseball game Wednesday, May 17, 2023, in Chicago.

Associated Press

with a patient approach that helped offset an overall lack of offensive power. They ran the bases efficiently, applying pressure on teams with a relentlessness that's been in short supply so far in 2023.

Statistically speaking, Cleveland is abysmal by nearly every measure.

Out of MLB's 30 teams, the Guardians are last in runs (169), homers (30), and slugging percentage (.340). Broadened to include some of the game's trendier metrics, it's not any prettier as the Guardians are dead last in barrel rate, hard-hit rate and weighted on-base percentage.

The 30 homers in 49 games are the club's fewest since hitting 26 over the same span in 1991, when Cleveland went 57-105.

From top to bottom in the Guardians' lineup there are holes — some wider and deeper than others.

Leadoff hitter Steven Kwan, who set the tone for Cleveland as a rookie last season, seems to be having a sophomore slump. He's batting .254 — 44 points below his 2022 average — and not having the same impact at the plate while continuing to play at a Gold Glove level in left field.

Andrés Giménez and Amed Rosario have been in funks, though both have had positive moments of late. José Ramírez has been his usual solid self, but has yet to go on one of those tears where he carries the team. Josh Bell, the team's biggest offseason pickup who was supposed to provide Cleveland's offense with

some needed punch while protecting Ramírez, has been a major disappointment with just three homers.

And then there's Cleveland's catchers, Mike Zunino (.170) and Cam Gallagher (.098), who are batting a combined .145 with 63 strikeouts in 145 at-bats. The offensive incompetence — Cleveland has scored three runs or fewer in 31 games — has further stressed a pitching staff that has held up pretty well, considering that starters Triston McKenzie and Aaron Civale have been on the injured list and Francona has had to count on rookies Logan Allen, Tanner Bibee and Hunter Gaddis. The bullpen has been mostly solid, although Emmanuel Clase leads the majors in

both saves (16) and blown saves (5), underscoring Cleveland's miniscule margin for error.

The Guardians have played 22 one-run games, going 9-13. They were 28-17 in one-run games last season. "We need to clean up some things," starter Cal Quantrill said following Wednesday's loss.

"We need to run the bases better. We need to not walk leadoff hitters like I did today. We need to score when we have opportunities to score, and we need to make sure we're giving ourselves a chance to hand it over to a very good 'pen with a lead."

"It's the little things for us, and I don't think we've done a very good job with them — myself included."

There's plenty of blame to be shared for the sluggish start with players, coaches, Francona and Cleveland's front office all owning a portion of culpability.

If there is a silver lining, it's that Cleveland doesn't play in AL East, where they would already be trailing by 14 1/2 games.

A turnaround isn't out of the questions, but it better happen soon or the Guardians will be faced with bigger decisions.

In the meantime, Francona will lean on wisdom gained through experience.

"Work hard, pay attention to detail, all the things we've talked about since the first thing of spring training," Francona said. "When it gets hard, that's when you really find out. We're going to have to dig deep." □

## Errol Spence Jr., Terence Crawford will fight for undisputed welterweight championship

By MARK ANDERSON

AP Sports Writer

**LAS VEGAS (AP)** — Errol Spence Jr. and Terence Crawford will meet in a much anticipated showdown when they fight for the undisputed welterweight championship July 29 in Las Vegas.

"Finally giving the fans what they want!" Spence posted on Instagram. "This one a

throwback fight on paper but it could be a one sided (butt) whooping one of the biggest fight(s) of the century!"

Both boxers are undefeated — Spence is 28-0 with 22 knockouts and Crawford is 38-0 with 29 KOs.

Spence holds the IBF, WBC and WBA belts, and Crawford is the WBO champion. □



Terence "Bud" Crawford, left, fights David Avanesyan during a WBO welterweight title boxing bout on Saturday, Dec. 10, 2022, in Omaha, Neb.

Associated Press



